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ABSTRACT

Results of a study using a theoretical model to measure student attitudes toward social studies are reported. Attitudes were measured as they related to five constructs: (1) teacher attitudes, including support and reinforcement for the student and enthusiasm for subject: (2) student self-concept, scholastic attitude, peer acceptance, and achievement: (3) instruction such as homework, class discussion, learning activities, and teacher effectiveness: (4) learning environment variables of cohesiveness, formality, friction, satisfaction, difficulty, school pressure and size, and class size: and (5) parental friction, support, and trust. One-hundred thirty-five seventh and ninth grade students plus their teachers responded to an affective assessment questionnaire. Results indicated that variables in all five constructs were significantly related to attitudes toward social studies. However, the patterns were not constant between ninth and seventh grades. Generally ninth graders were more affected by issues of scholarship and social relationships than seventh graders, although student attitudes, the learning environment, and teacher variables are importantly related to social studies attitudes regardless of grade level. (KC)

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Correlates of Attitudes Toward Social Studies[1]

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In recent years there has been an increased interest in the measurement and understanding of attitudes toward school and subject matters. This follows a natural evolution of thinking which suggests that first we measure constructs of interest, second we attempt to predict relationships among these constructs, and third, we attempt to influence behavior (Walberg, 1969).

There are many reasons for this recent interest. First, the fostering of positive attitudes toward subject matters and school is a goal which is supported by most educators. Since students spend a great portion of their youth in schools, educators feel that the school experience should leave one with positive attitudes about the school and its curricula. Thus, like achievement, attitudes become a primary objective of the educational process. A further consequence is that in many instructional programs it is increasingly more common to see goals relating to the development of positive attitudes toward the subject matter. Thus, school evaluators, among other school district personnel, are concerned about the status of attitudes toward the subject matter as a function of the instruction program.

A second reason is that attitudes have been found to be related to achievement. While these findings have been observed mainly in mathematics (Aiken, 1970, 1976), it is widely believed that attitudes are fundamentally

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and causally related to achievement, a conclusion which seems more difficult to establish empirically than logically. The strength of this relationship between attitude and achievement is, however, quite slight, but believed to be stronger for students of moderate achievement (Bloom, 1976). This follows the reasoning that many bright students achieve highly even when they dislike a subject matter, a state of affairs which, if true, attenuates a correlation.

A third reason for increasing concern about attitudes toward school and subject matters is based on the belief that any student who has a positive attitude toward a subject matter will be more likely to elect that subject matter in future studies (Mager, 1968).

A fourth reason is that if subject matter disciplines, such as math, science, and social studies, are to continue to have public support at local, state and federal levels, attitudes toward these subject matters should be relatively positive. Negative attitudes may ultimately result in a decline of resources allocated to programs in respective areas. If negative attitudes toward subject matters are passed on to future generations of students, these persons, as adults, will be biased with respect to their attitudes toward these subject matters.

A search of the literature will reveal that few studies exist that focus on the attitudes of students toward social studies. In a recent study by Haladyna and Thomas (in press), it was found that attitudes toward social studies were quite low relative to attitudes toward other subject matters. Not only were social studies attitudes low, but a decline was observed from grade four through grade eight. Similar results were found in a study by Fernandez, Massey, and Dornbusch (1975) with a sample of secondary school students. Fernandez, et al., also found that many students

considered social studies unimportant and less difficult than other subject matters.

The paucity of studies on the topic of attitudes toward social studies is quite understandable considering the plight of social studies research in general. In a recent review (National Science Foundation, 1978), it was concluded: "Social studies educators have not been much interested in or affected by research" (p. 40).

The review goes on to suggest that social studies research is quite factionated and generally lacking in both quantity and quality.

A reaction to this review by three social studies educators (Shaver, Davis, & Helburn, 1978) was equally stinging in criticism:

> "The research knowledge in this field is basically in disarray. There are few cumulative findings of either practical or theoretical significance. Most of the research (as in science education) is done by doctoral candidates and is not from a theoretical base nor using a strategy designed or likely to build knowledge based on related replicative studies" (p. 26).

The present research was intended to overcome some of these difficulties by (a) presenting a theoretical model for affective aspects of schooling relevant to social studies education (Olsen, Haladyna & Shaughnessy, 1979), (b) providing validated measures of aspects of the model (Haladyna, Shaughnessy, & Olsen, 1980), (c) systematically collecting data across a wide range of school districts, class sizes, and regions which reflect the dimensions under study, and (d) employing a three-stage statistical analysis which probes into relations that are believed to exist between attitudes toward social studies and other affective traits.

The specific purpose of the study reported in this paper was to ascertain the relationship between social studies attitudes and a variety of measures representing several constructs which are believed to be importantly related to social studies attitudes. Specifically, social studies

attitudes are hypothesized to relate to such constructs as (a) teacher, (b) student, (c) instruction, (d) school and learning environment, and (e) home environment.

These five constructs are believed to account for most of the variance of a dependable social studies attitude measure. In summary the model can be expressed thus:

$$Y = F [T, S, I, SE, H]$$

where Y is the criterion variable, attitude toward social studies,

T is a set of teacher variables,

S is a set of student variables,

I is instructional quality represented by various dimensions,

SE is the school and learning environment, represented by various dimensions, and

H is a set of home and parent variables.

The model is more thoroughly described in a paper by Olsen, Haladyna, and Shaughnessy (1979). Two observations about the model are noteworthy: (a) there is believed to be a considerable overlap among these major constructs, and (b) the relationship among these constructs and between these constructs and the criterion is not considered simple. Therefore traditional bivariate or linear multivariate models of analysis should not adequately explain these relationships. Thus the research involves a three-stage process of analysis which should reveal a truer picture of the relationships between these constructs and the criterion, social studies attitude.

Method

Sample

This initial study in a series of studies involved 135 seventh and ninth grade students from junior high schools in the central Willamette

Valley. The sample is rather small and is not intended to be representative of a larger population. On the other hand, the sample is equally distributed with respect to girls and boys, representative of a larger population with respect to achievement levels, aptitude for learning, and other demographic variables.

This sample was derived from a field test of instrumentation performed in the Spring of 1979 in 36 classrooms in this region as a precursor of a larger study conducted with 270 classrooms in grades four, seven and nine.

Instrumentation

In consultation with social studies educators and following an intensive review of available instruments in the affective domain pertinent to the purpose of this study, several decisions were reached regarding the selection and creation of measures used to represent the criterion variable and the major constructs of the model upon which this study is based.

The sum total of this effort was an Affective Assessment Questionnaire that represents each of the five constructs and the criterion measure. The seventh and ninth grade version of this instrument had 148 responses which yielded 49 variables. Each of the major constructs will be briefly described and instruments reviewed which measure these constructs.

Attitude Toward Social Studies. A five-scale attitude inventory developed by Haladyna and Thomas (1979) was used to measure the criterion variable, attitude toward social studies, as well as student attitudes toward school, and three other curricular areas. These other measures composed part of the set of variables representing the constructs student characteristics. Evidence for the factorial validity of these measures as well as for the reliability of these scales was reported by Haladyna

and Thomas (1979). The internal consistence reliability estimates ranged from .60 to .86 for the sample of this study; the social studies attitude measure had a reliability estimate of .85.

Learning Environment. Three-item scales representing twelve aspects of the learning environment were created from the Learning Environment Inventory (Anderson and Walberg, undated). This instrument has been used in over 400 studies in the United States and internationally in a variety of circumstances (Walberg, personal communication). Preliminary analysis of these variables reveals reliability estimates that range from .23 to .83 with a median value of .52. These estimates are relatively low and principally limit the degree to which any of these twelve variables can be highly related to the criterion measure.

The other variables of the study were drawn from a wide variety of sources, many of which were diffusely represented in previous studies. Many items were written by social studies educators or the authors in an effort to achieve a complete mapping of the theoretical model posited. The report of the validity of these measures as well as their reliability estimates will appear in a validation study (Haladyna, Shaughnessy, & Olsen, 1980). Preliminary analyses reveal that most of these measures possess satisfactory internal consistency reliability estimates and good construct validity.

Procedure

School districts were given particulars of the study and were asked to participate. Those choosing to participate provided written consent. Building principals were approached in the same manner, and each was given a brief summary of the project. Upon receiving consent from the cooperating principal and teacher, copies of the form were administered to students.

For each classroom where data were collected, the teacher was asked to leave the room and complete a teacher survey form. A field representative administered the student survey form in the classroom to all students. All responses were collected anonymously, and no attempt was made to identify any participant in any way. Therefore, all participants were protected from invasion of privacy, and confidentiality in reporting these results was guaranteed.

Analysis of Data

In theory building, the process that was followed was (a) formulation of the constructs that were believed to exist and descriptions of the relationships among these constructs, (b) explication of the measures that represent these constructs, and (c) validation, which is a process whereby evidence is collected to confirm statements about the relationships of these constructs. These procedures are those prescribed by Cronbach and Meehl (1955) for establishing construct valid interpretations of measures of importance. When such interpretations are not valid, one may attribute such a state of affairs to (a) faulty theorizing, (b) inadequate instrumentation, or (c) insufficient or inappropriate analysis. The analysis of data was undertaken to avoid the third possibility. The validation study to be reported (Haladyna, Shaughnessy, & Olsen, 1980) reports steps taken to avoid the second possibility. Given these precautions, negative evidence can then be reasonably attributed to faulty theorizing, and one is compelled to reject or modify the theoretical model.

A three-stage analysis was conducted. The first step was a standard correlational analysis to determine the simple, bivariate relationship between each variable and the criterion. The second stage involves a regression analysis using the general linear model. The model allows the

development of a series of variables believed to account for the criterion variance and a direct test of the model. The model also allows for tests of unique and interactive contributions for variables. The third stage involves the assessment of the regressions for possible non-linear trends. The standard correlational analysis is a linear method, and Haladyna (1973) has shown that one can reasonably expect non-linear relationships to exist in such correlations. Therefore the linear correlational method underestimates relationships.

In this paper, only Stages 1 and 2 are reported.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are reported for Stage 1 and Stage 2 analyses by each of the major constructs studied.

Stage 1 - Analysis

Correlations between all variables and attitude toward social studies are reported in Table 1 for the seventh and ninth grade samples.

Teacher variables. It was hypothesized that teacher variables should be substantially related to students' attitudes toward social studies. The results in Table 1 generally confirm this hypothesis. For the seventh grade sample, teacher enthusiam was very highly related to social studies attitude. These seventh graders seem to be greatly affected by the teachers who like their subject matter, who know about their subject matter, and who communicate this positive feeling to their students. For the ninth grade sample, three other variables were related to social studies attitude. These were (a) support for the individual, (b) good teacher, and (c) reinforcing to student. These variables are more diffuse in meaning but offer insights into teacher-student relationships. Teacher support for the individual indicates that the teacher is willing to help that student individually, to

listen, to react, and to express individual concern. The variable labeled "good teacher" is very diffuse and consists of items that reflect many aspects of the teacher including friendliness, positive attitude, fairness, and interest in student. Generally, the good teacher is student-centered. The third variable, reinforcing to student, refers to the tendency of some teachers to offer kind words when performance is good. The difference between correlations for seventh graders and for ninth graders seems to reveal the tendency for the older students to become more differentiated with respect to what fosters positive attitudes toward social studies. With the seventh grade sample, only teacher enthusiam was highly related, while with the ninth grade sample, the other three variables were statisfically significantly related.

Table 1

Correlations[1] Between all Variables of the Study and Social Studies Attitude

	Grade 7 N = 44	Grade 9 N = 91
A. TEACHER		
1. Support for the individual	21	23**
2. Good Teacher	-06	27**
3. Enthusiasm for Subject	55**	16
4. Reinforcing to Student	17	24**
B. STUDENT		
Demographic		
1. Sex	-09	-06
2. Mobility	-11	-03
3. TV Viewing Habits	-02	12
Attitudes Toward		
1. School	36**	41**
2. Reading	51**	40**
3. Math	12	04
4. Science	30*	20*

Table 1 continued

	Grade 7 N = 44	Grade 9 N = 91
Academic Self-Concept		
1. Confidence in Subject Matter	13	51**
2. Confidence in School Learning	22	25*
Scholastic Attitude		
1. Checking Out Books	25	-10
2. Amount of homework Each Week	-42**	-08
3. Academic Plans	04	-35**
Peer Acceptance		
1. Likes Peers	15	-03
2. Peers Like Student	-09	37**
Achievement		
1. Self-Report Grades	04	48**
C. INSTRUCTION		
1. Homework Assigned in Class	-29*	25**
2. Opportunity to Talk	-24	-43**
3. Teacher Talk	03	12
4. Use of Supplementary Materials	03	01
5. Amount of Activities in Class	-10	-16
6. Overall Teacher Effectiveness	33**	50**
D. LEARNING ENVIRONMENT		
1. Cohesiveness	-14	22*
2. Formality	-06	09
3. Speed	06	15
4. Environment	35**	19*
5. Friction	16	05
6. Goal Direction	06	-07
7. Favoritism	-17	-08
8. Cliqueness	19	05
9. Satisfaction	20	21*
10. Disorganization	39**	05
11. Difficulty	-36**	12
12. Apathy	24	02
13. Liking School	-12	04
14. School Spirit	11	04
15. School Pressure	-08	06
16. Class Size	09	00
17. School Size	-28*	-17

Table 1 continued

	Grade 7 N = 44	Grade 9 N = 91
E. PARENTS		
1. Parental Support	30*	22*
2. Parent Trust	05	02
3. Friction with Parents	25	05

[1] Decimals Omitted
*p < .05
**p < .01

Student variables. Student variables can be classified into the categories of demographic, attitude, academic self-concept, scholastic attitude, and peer acceptance. In general, these are characteristics of students that should not necessarily be strongly related to social studies attitudes.

The results of Table 1 show a consistent pattern for demographics and attitudes. No demographics are related to social studies attitudes, while attitudes toward school, reading and science are related. Not surprisingly, how a student perceives school and reading seems to be strongly related to how that student perceives social studies. Math was the exception, as a non-significant relationship was observed.

With the ninth grade sample, confidence in learning social studies was very highly related to social studies attitude. This was not true for the seventh grade sample. A smaller relationship was observed between overall confidence in learning and social studies attitude for the ninth grade sample but not for the seventh graders. Again, this difference between seventh and ninth graders may be attributed to a more differentiated outlook of the older and more mature students with respect to social studies

attitudes. The ninth graders clearly have a different outlook when it comes to self-confidence and social studies attitudes.

Scholastic attitude shows a tendency on the part of a student to be more scholarly oriented and to have more ambitious plans for schooling. The person with a high scholastic attitude is more school supportive and oriented. With respect to the findings of seventh and ninth grade students, a most interesting result was observed. With the seventh grade sample, amount of homework was negatively related to social studies attitude. Students who reported less homework each week tended to like social studies. This result was not replicated with the ninth grade sample. Instead, academic plans were importantly related to social studies attitude. Those with more ambitious plans for future schooling tended to dislike social studies. This is in line with the results of the study by Fernandez, et al., (1975) where they found that students found social studies less difficult and less relevant.

Peer acceptance was a factor in social studies attitudes for students in the ninth grade sample. The size of the relationship ($r = .37$) would suggest that students who reported being liked by peers in the class had a better perception of social studies than others. This is difficult to explain, and the results may be artifactual and not replicated with a larger sample.

Self-reported grades did not significantly correlate with social studies attitude for the seventh graders but did for ninth graders. Those who did better in social studies like social studies better. The sizable relationship ($r = .48$) would indicate that this is a fairly strong tendency and also emerges with the more mature and discriminating ninth graders.

Instruction. The way social studies instruction is conducted would seem to be importantly related to social studies attitudes. The variables in this category were expected to account for much of the criterion variance. Surprisingly, only amount of homework assigned in class, and overall teacher effectiveness were significantly related to social studies attitudes for the seventh graders. Students who received more homework tended to dislike social studies. This seems to suggest an anti-intellectual atmosphere on the part of seventh graders with respect to social studies. As expected, overall teacher effectiveness was potent in both samples as a correlate of social studies attitudes.

With the ninth grade sample, opportunity for talk in class was also related to social studies attitudes. It would be interesting to determine if student opportunity to talk is present in such classrooms. It would appear that if lecture dominates instruction, those students perceiving a lack of opportunity to talk would most likely be negatively affected in their attitude.

The most confusing finding here is the evident reversal of significant relationship regarding the homework assigned in class. While the relationship was negative for seventh graders, this relationship was positive for ninth graders. Whether this is a developmental difference in the two grade levels or an artifact of the small samples is indeterminant at this time. Other results have suggested that a developmental difference is occurring that substantially alters the constellation of variables that are most strongly related to social studies attitude.

Learning environment. A large number of variables existed in the category, although the reliability analyses revealed that most were not reliable enough to offer the results that were expected. It was anticipated

that the learning environment was very highly related to student attitudes. The results in Table 1 indicate only four of these 17 variables for grade seven were statistically significantly correlated with social studies attitude and in grade nine only 3 of 17 were significant.

A pleasant physical environment, organized instruction, and an easier class were significantly related to social studies attitude for seventh graders. School size was also related to attitude. Class cohesiveness, a pleasant physical environment, and student satisfaction seem to be highly related to social studies attitudes for ninth graders. These results, with others reported dealing with student variables, suggest that the social structure of the class seems to be more effective in determining social studies attitudes in the ninth grade. Such a tendency is not extant in the seventh graders.

Parents. There was an expectation that parents have a significant contribution to make with respect to students' perceptions of social studies. Results indicated that parent support for school and social studies attitude was, indeed, a factor, although the size of the relationship was moderate. The parent support variable consisted of items dealing with concern of parents for school, emphasis on doing well in school, degree of parental involvement with student, and specific concern with social studies.

Stage 2 - Analysis

The result of Stage 1 analysis was far more positive than expected. The number of significant correlations established a pattern of results that indicate that the model, as posited, indeed described major factors related to social studies attitudes. The Stage 2 analysis should reveal

the total effects of some of these promising variables. Five models were composed and each reveals the multiple correlation as well as the proportion of variance accounted by each model. These results appear in Table 2.

The first model dealt with attitudes. How much of a carry-over is there in attitudes toward school and certain subject matters to social studies attitudes? The results indicate that the multiple correlations were substantial for both samples, with 33.4% and 24.8% of the variance accounted by these attitude measures. It is clear from these results that student perceptions of other subjects as well as school does influence the way they perceive social studies. It is also clear that there is a difference in the two samples which may reflect a systematic and real difference between the two populations, namely that ninth graders are more differentiated in their perceptions of factors of schooling and are more peer oriented and, perhaps, more scholastically oriented.

The second model, shown in Table 2, deals with the effects of learning environment variables, one of the major constructs of the model. For the seventh grades, this set of variables accounted for 43.2% of the variance while only 12.7% of the variance was accounted for in the ninth grade sample. Factors indigenous to the classroom seemed important to seventh graders but far less important to ninth graders.

Only four teacher variables were examined in the third model. For seventh graders 37.5% of the variance was accounted for by these variables, while 26.7% was accounted for in the ninth grade sample. Thus it would seem that the teacher plays an important role in social studies attitudes, but that this role is stronger with the seventh graders than with ninth graders.

Table 2

Regression Analyses for Seventh and Ninth Grade Samples

Model	Number of Variables	Grade 7 Multiple Correlation	Grade 7 Percent of Accounted Variance	Grade 9 Multiple Correlation	Grade 9 Percent of Accounted Variance
1. Attitudes Toward School Reading, Math and Science	4	.578	33.4	.499	24.8
2. Learning Environment	12	.657	43.2	.356	12.7
3. Teacher	4	.612	37.5	.516	26.7
4. Academic Self-Concept	2	.240	5.8	.513	26.3
5. Comprehensive Model	8	.698	48.7	.678	46.0

a. Attitude Toward School
b. School Size
c. Teacher Talk
d. Confidence in Subject Matter
e. Teacher Enthusiasm
f. Teacher Reinforcement
g. Support for Individual
h. Parental Support

The fourth model dealt with academic self-concept, a dimension of the student construct. A very small percent of variance was accounted for by these variables for seventh graders, but 26.3% was accounted for in the ninth grade sample. This follows from earlier analyses and discussion that suggests that the ninth graders place a greater importance of scholarship in social studies and liking that subject matter.

The fifth and final model developed was a comprehensive model that combined the most promising of the variables of the studies. This comprehensive model included variables from all five constructs. Both models accounted for nearly 50% of criterion variance; multiple correlations were a robust .698 and .678 for the respective samples.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study which was based on a small and relatively limited sample were quite promising in terms of describing correlates of social studies attitudes. Of the five constructs posited as being related to social studies attitudes, all five yielded variables which were statistically significantly related to social studies. Interestingly, the patterns of significantly correlated variables were not constant from the seventh grade sample to the ninth grade sample. What is suggested by these results is that these older, ninth grade students perceive social studies quite differently than seventh graders. These ninth graders are more affected by issues of scholarship and social relationships than seventh graders. It is also clear that the student attitudes, the learning environment, and teacher variables are importantly related to social studies attitudes regardless of grade level.

Future studies are being conducted to determine these relationships with a sample of substantial size and representativeness. If these

results can be replicated in these future studies, it would appear that a great many affective variables, as posited in this model, are related to social studies attitudes. Thus this work helps us to better understand the dynamics that take place to form social studies attitudes. While these results are correlational and descriptive, they can be used to create causal models which can explain the formation of these attitudes as a function of the student, the teacher, instruction, the learning environment, and parents. The model is testable and carries with it a research base and suitable instrumentation. Given that some of these variables are modifiable in the process of schooling, we can then begin to initiate programs of intervention to positively change attitudes toward social studies. Since many educators are willing to admit that attitudes toward social studies are as important as achievement in this area, such interventions with the intent to improve attitudes should be most welcome.

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